



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 18.31

Subject: Religious Programs and Services for Youth in Youth Development Centers and DCS Group Homes

Supersedes: DCS 18.31, 01/01/04

Local policy: Yes
Local procedures: Yes
Requires training: No
Applicable Practice Model Standard(s):
Yes

Approved by:

Effective date: 05/01/99

Revised date: 04/01/05

Application

To All Youth Development Center Superintendents and Employees, DCS Group Home Supervisors and Employees, Youth and Volunteers

Authority: TCA 37-5-106

Policy

Each Youth Development Center (YDC) and DCS Group Home shall provide opportunities to its youth for religious services, education, and counseling on a voluntary basis. The Observation and Assessment Center shall develop separate policies to address religious programs and services at that facility. Every reasonable effort shall be made to facilitate the free practice of religion limited only to legitimate security and operational considerations.

Procedures

- A. Documentation of youth's religious preference for youth in YDC's** During orientation to a YDC, all youth shall be informed of the procedure for voluntarily participating in worship or religious services performed by a chaplain/ designated staff.
- B. Religious services and programs for youth in YDC's**
1. YDCs with chaplains shall have the chaplain coordinate religious programs and services. All Department of Children's Services staff including facility chaplains shall

avoid proselytizing for a particular faith or denomination.

2. The Superintendent of a YDC without a chaplain shall designate a qualified person to coordinate the facility's religious programs in conjunction with certified volunteers. The designee may be part time or full time, and may be a staff member, contract employee or volunteer.
3. Religious services held at a YDC or DCS group home shall be non-sectarian. Services may be a part of the facility's scheduled activities.
4. Proper atmosphere and equipment needed to conduct and administer religious programs and sufficient space for the service shall be provided.
5. Services shall be conducted in an area of the facility that does not limit the activities of those youth who do not wish to attend. (i.e. using the entire day room of a living unit.)

**C. Chaplain's
responsibilities**

1. Chaplains, as confidants, have a dual responsibility to the youth and the facility. He/she must keep pastoral confidences intact, and at the same time, protect the facility, its staff and the youth.
2. Chaplains, or designee, shall interview all youth during orientation and ascertain their religious preference and history.
3. Youth may request to speak with the chaplain at any time. The chaplain will meet with the youth as soon as practicable.
4. Chaplains shall conduct non-sectarian worship services at least once a week or make arrangements for such in their absence from the facility.
5. Chaplains shall develop and maintain close relationships with community religious resources.
6. For youth desiring a specific religious preference, sectarian religious activities shall be permitted under the leadership of certified volunteers. These activities shall be arranged in advance by the chaplain or designee, and be approved by the superintendent

-
- D. Religious services for youth in DCS Group Homes**
1. Youth in DCS group homes shall have opportunities for worship.
 2. Based on information gathered during orientation, the DCS group home supervisor/designee shall identify area churches that youth may attend. Trained volunteers may be available to transport youth who request a particular sectarian worship service.
 3. Youth in DCS group homes shall be allowed worship opportunities in the community unless the treatment team recommends an alternative method for meeting the youth's needs. This shall be documented in the youth's Individual Program Plan (IPP).
 4. The supervisors of DCS group homes or designee shall coordinate all religious programs through the assistance of certified volunteers.
- E. Use of volunteers and contract staff for religious services and programs**
- All volunteers and contract staff associated with religious services and programs shall be screened, trained, and approved through the procedures outlined in the Department of Children's Services Volunteer Procedure Manual.
- F. Religious materials and equipment**
1. The chaplain or designee assigned to religious programs, with the coordination of the superintendent or DCS group home supervisor shall review and approve donations of equipment and materials for use in religious programs. All donations will be accepted in accordance with DCS policy [30.3, State Personal Property](#).
 2. There shall not be any religious materials or paraphernalia maintained in the general living areas of the facility.
 3. When appropriate, liturgical apparel may be worn during a religious activity. When not in use, this apparel shall be stored by staff.
- G. Other religious services**
1. Requests for special religious diets shall be coordinated through the food service staff and the DCS Director of Food Services.

2. Youth who request spiritual guidance and/or counseling from the staff shall be referred to the chaplain, designee, or an approved volunteer of the youth's preferred faith.
3. Youth who express a desire to be baptized or make a commitment to a particular sect shall be referred by the chaplain, designee, or approved volunteer to a person of that faith for assistance. When requested, staff shall assist the youth in facilitating their spiritual adjustment upon re-entry into the community.

Forms

None

Collateral Documents

Department of Children's Services Volunteer Procedure Manual

Standards

ACA 3-JCRF-5F-01

ACA 3-JTS-5G-01

ACA 3-JTS-5G-02

ACA 3-JTS-5G-03

ACA 3-JTS-5G-04

ACA 3-JTS-5G-05

DCS Practice Model Standard – 8-306